

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 CU-04 AID-05 IO-13
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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: ELAB TH
SUBJECT: LABOR DEVELOPMENTS

1. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HAS MODIFIED MARTIAL LAW RESTRICTIONS ON LABOR UNION MEETINGS. IN LETTER DATND JAN 10 , 1978, FROM UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE WINYU ANGKHANARAK TO DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE DEPARTMENT AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS, MINISTRY RULED LABOR UNION MEETINGS WHICH ARE CALLED FOR PURPOSES SPECIFIED IN LABOR RELATIONS ACT OF 1975 ARE NOW CONSIDERED "NON-POLITICAL" IN NATURE AND NO LONGER REQUIRE PRIOR POLICE PERMITS UNDER NARV ORDER NO 4 WHICH GOVERNS POLITICAL GATHERINGS OF FIVE OR MORE INDIVIDUALS. UNDER NEW MINISTERIAL REGULATIONS, LABOR UNIONS MUST GIVE LOCAL POLICE AND RESPONSIBLE LABOR DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS ADVANCE NOTIFICATION OF DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF ALL PLANNED LABOR MEETINGS. LOCAL POLICE OFFICERS AND LABOR OFFICIALS WILL ATTEND SUCH MEETINGS AND ORDER ANY WHICH BECOME "POLITICAL" STOPPED IMMEDIATELY.

2. COMMENT: THAI LABOR LEADERS ARE OF COURSE ANXIOUS TO RESUME ROUTINE LABOR UNION ACTIVITIES, I.E. EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS, MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS AND EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS, AND INTEND TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MAKE IMMEDIATE USE OF NEW REGULATIONS. AT SAME TIME THEY ARE FULLY AWARE THAT MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HAS RETAINED BROAD DISCRETIONARY POWER UNDER NEW REGULATIONS TO SET LIMITS ON LABOR UNION ACTIVITIES THROUGH ARBITRARY INTERPRETATION OF WHAT IS "POLITICAL." HOW FAR LABOR LEADERS WILL GO IN TESTING LIMITS UNDER NEW REGULATIONS OR HOW RESTRICTIVELY MINISTRY OF INTERIOR WILL INTERPRET TERM "POLITICAL" ONLY TIME WILL TELL.

3. NEW RTG HAS ENCOUNTERED FIRST SERIOUS OVERT LABOR UNREST IN FORM OF TWO WILDCAT STRIKES IN PUBLIC SECTOR. CENTRAL ISSUE IN BOTH STRIKES WAS DEMAND BY GOVERNMENT WORKERS WHO LACK CIVIL SERVICE STATUS FOR COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCES SIMILAR TO THOSE GIVEN BY RTG ON OCTOBER 1, 1977, TO GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES WITH CIVIL SERVICE STATUS. FIRST STRIKE OCCURRED ON JAN 12 WHEN 360 WORKERS OF PUBLIC WAREHOUSE ORGANIZATION SUBMITTED LIST OF DEMANDS AND WALKED OFF JOB. RTG IMMEDIATELY INFORMED WORKERS THAT ACTION WAS CLEAR VIOLATION OF MARTIAL LAW BAN ON STRIKES. AFTER DAY AND HALF, MANAGEMENT AGREED TO CONSIDER DEMANDS AND EMPLOYEES RETURNED TO WORK.

4. ON JAN 16 , 1978, TEACHERS IN VARIOUS PROVINCES USED THE OCCASION OF TEACHERS' DAY TO PUBLICIZE THEIR DEMAND FOR A 200 BAHT PER MONTH COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE. IN ALL BUT KHON KAEN PROVINCE, TEACHERS CALLED OFF PROTEST AFTER ONE DAY AND RETURNED TO WORK. OUR CONSULATE IN UDORN REPORTS THAT IN KHON KAEN, LOCAL AUTHORITIES BROKE UP PROTEST RALLY AND DETAINED 170 TEACHERS OVERNIGHT. AFTER SEVERAL DAYS OF FURTHER DEMONSTRATIONS AND WIDESPREAD BOYCOTT OF SCHOOLS BY TEACHERS, RTG CABINET DEFUSED ISSUE BY GRANTING TEACHERS 200 BAHT PER MONTH COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE RETROACTIVE TO OCT 1 AND AGREEING TO CONSIDER DEMANDS FOR UPGRADING STATUS OF TEACHERS AND TRANSFERRING JURISDICTION FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS FROM MINISTRY OF INTERIOR TO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION.
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5. ON JAN 23, 1978, PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK CHOMANAN GAVE WELCOMING ADDRESS AT OPENING OF REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON "LABOR MANAGEMENT RELATIONS IN PUBLIC ENTERPRISES" WHICH IS BEING ORGANIZED AND SPONSORED JOINTLY BY ILO AND FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG. ACCORDING TO ILO REGIONAL DIRECTOR KARASAKI, KRIANGSAK TOOK INITIATIVE IN OFFERING TO MAKE OPENING SPEECH. ALTHOUGH KRIANGSAK'S REMARKS CONTAINED LITTLE NEW ON RTG LABOR POLICY, HIS PRESENCE OBVIOUSLY IMPLIED HIS SUPPORT AND PUT HIS PRESTIGE BEHIND CONCEPT OF LABOR EDUCATION SEMINARS BY FOREIGN LABOR ASSISTANCE ORGANIZATIONS.
WHITEHOUSE

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